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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3324
INFO RUEHXQ/EU MEM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6049
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5209
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 1697
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 9902
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 0995
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3594
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0588
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1769
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0834
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY
RUEHMI/USOFFICE FRC FT LAUDERDALE PRIORITY 2850
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0511

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000495

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/03/2021
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CARACAS ARCHBISHOP RAISED TO CARDINAL

REF: 05 CARACAS 3022

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(b).

¶1. (U) The Vatican announced February 21 that Caracas Archbishop Jorge Urosa had been nominated by Pope Benedict XVI as Cardinal. Press reports said Urosa would be formally installed at a meeting of cardinals in the Vatican on March 24. Urosa, 63, is one of 15 new cardinals to be appointed in March, according to press reports. Urosa, formerly Archbishop of Valencia, had just been installed in Caracas in November 2005. Urosa will succeed former Archbishop Ignacio Cardinal Velasco, who died in July 2003 and was a central figure in the drama of the near-coup against President Hugo Chavez in April 2002. The BRV ambassador in the Vatican, Ivan Rincon, welcomed the appointment, saying that Venezuela had lacked a cardinal with the spiritual values of Urosa -- a swipe at retired Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara.

¶2. (C) Comment: As the Archbishop of Caracas, Urosa was expected to receive the cardinalate. That it comes so quickly after his appointment to the Caracas Archdiocese, however, may be taken as a sign that Venezuela is a Vatican priority. The announcement completes the Church's transition from the April 2002 leadership to one that has less bad blood with the Chavez administration. Church leadership insists privately that the change is in personalities only and not in its strong disapproval of the Chavez administration. In any event, as a cardinal, Urosa may take some of the limelight away from retired Cardinal Castillo Lara, an ardent and outspoken Chavez critic.

WHITAKER